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Irine Chachanidze

Akaki Tsereteli State University, Georgia
Email: ir.chachanidze@gmail.com

Tamar Guchua

Akaki Tsereteli State University, Georgia
Email: me.tamuna@gmail.com

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Irine Chachanidze, Tamar Guchua
Akaki Tsereteli State Univeristy, Georgia

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ABSTRACT

Russification is a special case of cultural assimilation, when small nations fall under the influence of the Russian language and culture (Weinreich, 1953; Thaden, 1981; Weinerman, 1996; Kappeler, 2004; Jones, 2005; Miller, 2008; Weeks, 2010). At the beginning of the 20th century, the norms of the language policy developed in the Russian Empire applied to the conquered and imperial countries, including Georgia.

The present paper aims to study the problems of the Russification language policy on the example of Georgia. The digital corpus of “Sakartvelo” (Georgia), the newspaper of the Georgian Emigrants of the early 20th century, is used to provide empirical data. Illustrative data have been collected and the questions given below are discussed using the method of sociolinguistic: 1) To what extent was the local population of Georgia ready to accept the Russian language in schools and theological education? 2) To what extent was the “immersion method” of teaching justified in the Russification language policy of the early 20th century in Georgia? 3) Under the Russification language policy in Georgia, in what directions was the protection of the Georgian language provided?

Such an approach to the problem will show us what measures were taken by the founders of the Georgian émigré press in terms of exposing the educational policy of Russification, forming a healthy public opinion and protecting the Georgian language, more specifically, how the Georgian newspaper “Sakartvelo”, published in Paris in 1903-1905, responded to this problem.

Keywords: *Language policy, Russification, Georgian language, Immersion method.*

Introduction

Russification refers to such a deliberate policy of the Russian Empire, which is aimed at the Russification of national minorities; it is a form of assimilation in which non-Russian people accept the Russian language and culture (Djanelidze, 2008). Various approaches and special studies have been devoted to the phenomenon of Russification in Western political literature (Weinreich, 1953; Kappeler, 2004; Miller, 2008). Eli Weinerman distinguishes political, linguistic, religious, cultural and ethnic Russification (Weinerman, 1996).

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The era of Russification began with the suppression of “the January Uprising” in St. Petersburg in 1863. However, its roots can be traced back to the reign of Nicholas I, who insisted on using Russian instead of French for internal government correspondence (Riasanovsky, 2005, p. 191).

According to Theodore Weeks, from 1863 the “national policy” is understood as “Russification”. This term is often interpreted differently, hence some clarification is needed. The Russian government rarely attempted to “denationalize” non-Russian people; moreover, the policy aimed at punishing disloyalty, preventing disorder, centralizing, and promoting Russian as a “lingua franca”. From the beginning of the 20th century, “Russification” was particularly successful. From the point of view of non-Russian people limiting education in their native language, imposing strict censorship and even banning publications in certain languages were considered to be an attack directed against their culture and nation. It should be noted that at that time Russian administrators were less interested in the development of non-Russian cultures and languages, which they did not consider worthy of attention (Weeks, 2010, p. 98).

Edward C. Thaden identified three separate kinds of Russification: unplanned, administrative, and cultural. Unplanned Russification refers to the adoption of the Russian language and culture by non-Russians through a process of more or less voluntary cultural assimilation to prevailing norms. Administrative Russification refers to the increasing centralization of the Russian imperial bureaucracy that was an on-going process from at least the reign of Nicholas I. Centralization and “standardization” in the Russian Empire inevitably implied a strong degree of Russification, as Russian was the language of the imperial bureaucracy and thus held precedence above all other languages. Finally, cultural Russification refers to the deliberate policy of attempting to assimilate non-Russians culturally, that is, to make Russians out non-Russians (Thaden, 1981).

Russia was the political center of the empire, and the laws and norms developed here were also applied in other countries of the empire, including annexed Georgia. The Russification policy in Georgia was carried out in three directions: a) political, b) economic and c) cultural. Russia tried to conquer the country in all three directions: politically – by using weapons, economically - by colonizing production, culturally - by Russifying the education. Georgia had to become a constituent part of the empire through the Russification of the Georgian people. The implementation of the idea started from schools. The native Georgian language was completely removed from the curricula and was replaced by Russian (Djanelidze, 2008).

The beginning of the 20th century is one of the most acute and important transitional periods of the Russification language policy in Georgia followed by an endless dispute. Therefore, it can be called a “micro-era”.

Russification in Georgia and the Georgian Émigré Press

It was in 19th century when the state function of the Georgian language was first threatened. Georgia lost its statehood in 1801 and the Russian Empire annexed it completely; Georgia became a constituent part of the Russian Empire, and the Russian language policy held the fate of the Georgian language in its hands. Since then, the Russian language had become the language of clerical work, education, courts, and religious service in Georgia. The Russian authorities canceled liturgy in the Georgian language, made Russian the language of instruction in schools, incited ethnic and national conflicts among the residents of the territory of Georgia, etc.

The Georgian press, which protected the interests of the Georgian nation, was subjected to strict censorship rules imposed by the autocratic regime of Tsarist Russia until 1917. Despite such strict conditions, it was still possible to preach about national liberation ideas in Georgia. However, the principles of the democratic press were still limited and violated. Therefore, to save Georgia, which was under the pressure of the Russification policy, prominent representatives of the Georgian society tried to establish and publish such Georgian magazines and newspapers in Western Europe (Paris, Geneva, Berlin) that could be printed without the censorship imposed by the Russian Empire and would disseminate the goals and ideals of the Georgian people.

This is how the pre-revolutionary (1917) Georgian émigré press was formed and launched, which included a total of four periodicals:

1. “Drosha” (Flag), 1873, a hectographic newspaper, Paris, the editor: Niko Nikoladze.
2. “Sakartvelo” (Georgia), the body of the Georgian Socialist-Federalist Party, 1903-1905, Paris, the editors: Archil Jorjadze, Giorgi Laskhishvili, Tedo Sakhokia, the publisher: Giorgi Dekanozishvili; its French version was also published: “La Géorgie”.
3. “Tavisupali Sakartvelo” (Free Georgia), 1913-1914, a monthly magazine dedicated to national issues, the editor: Petre Surguladze, Geneva.
4. “Kartuli Gazeti” (Georgian Gazette), the body of the European Committee of the Georgian National Party, 1916-1918, Berlin, the editors: Leo Kereselidze, Giorgi Kereselidze.

The Newspaper “Sakartvelo”

The newspaper "Sakartvelo" covers the issues of the educational language policy of Russification in the late 19th and early 20th century in Georgia in much detail. The present paper analyses the problems of the language policy highlighted in the mentioned periodical.

“Sakartvelo” _ the newspaper of the Georgian Socialist-Federalist Party was established in 1903

in Paris and was in circulation until 1905. The editor-in-chief of the newspaper was Archil Jorjadze, one of the founders of the Socialist-Federalist Party. The publisher was Giorgi Dekanozishvili, a political and public figure and a publicist, who promptly distributed the newspaper in European countries, and introduced Georgia, the Georgian people and Georgian culture to the public. Public figures and politicians, who were in France (Tedo Sakhokia, Zurab Avalishvili, Noe Zhordania and others) were actively involved in activities connected with the newspaper (Sharadze, 2001, p. 25).

It is worth noting that initially, from 1901, the future socialist-federalists Archil Djordjadze, Giorgi Laskhishvili and Giorgi Dekanozishvili, who later connected their fate with foreign countries, headed the newspaper “Tsnobis Purtseli” (News Sheet) published in Georgia. “Tsnobis Purtseli” published in Georgia and “Sakartvelo” published abroad were joint periodical publications with common ideas and aspirations (Sharadze, 2001: 29). Therefore, it was logical that both newspapers published letters of a similar political, economic and cultural nature including the correspondence related to the educational language policy that holds significant interest for us.

The great merit of the newspaper “Sakartvelo” was the fact that it was the first to raise the question of the national freedom of the Georgian people in Europe. In order to popularize the Georgian problem and attract the attention of the European democratic society, Archil Jorjadze, Giorgi Dekanozishvili and their associates published “La Géorgie” _ a French version of the newspaper “Sakartvelo” in Paris. Renaud was the editor-in-chief of the newspaper, and Giorgi Dekanozishvili's wife, Henrietta Frenois, participated in its publication and preparation. Along with the materials that were printed in “Sakartvelo” and translated from Georgian, it published the letters and comments of French and other Western European political figures (Shvelidze, 1993, p. 114).

Methodology

The aim of the present paper is to study the problems of the educational policy of Russification in Georgia at the beginning of the 20th century. The digital corpus of the newspaper “Sakartvelo” is used as an empirical base.

The research methodology is based on collecting illustrative data and searching for answers to the following questions using the method of sociolinguistic analysis: 1) To what extent was the local population of Georgia ready to accept the Russian language in schools and theological education?; 2) To what extent was the “immersion method” of teaching justified in the Russification language policy of the early 20th century in Georgia?; 3) Under the Russification language policy in Georgia, in what directions was the protection of the Georgian language provided?

Such an approach to the problem will give us the opportunity to see the threats the Georgian

language faced in historical perspective: 1) Under what pressure did the Georgian language have to function and 2) What kind of the Russification language policy was carried out in the education system? In fact, for the Russian imperial regime, language was a tool by means of which it tried to assimilate the inhabitants of the conquered territories.

Russification in Georgian Schools

Language education policy is a form of language policy through which political ideologies can be put into practice (Tannenbaum & Shohamy, 2023, p. 10). Language education policies can be overt or covert, or even contain elements of both. An example of an overt language education policy would be an educational program that specifies what should be taught, for how long, and which teaching methodologies and materials should be used. The national curriculum is often designed as an official document and is distributed to educational institutions. However, the program may have hidden aspects which may include the removal of some subjects or languages based on the political ideologies in power.

Shohamy indicates that language education policy is a powerful mechanism through which language behavior is imposed especially if language is made compulsory by the government or education authorities (Shohamy, 2006, p. 76). Language education policies determine which languages should be taught, learned and used in society. Shohamy believes that language education policies can be used by the government to demonstrate language loyalty, patriotism and collective identity from the population. On the other hand, language education policies can be manipulated from the bottom up; Spolsky (2004) notes that there is often a gap between the language of the home and the language that is offered by the education system of the country.

A language policy in terms of Russification took place in the mid-19th century under Alexander II, whose administration aimed to unify the empire through a series of measures, including the spread of the Russian language. After the Polish Uprising of 1863, the Russian language was declared to be an official language of the Kingdom of Poland. By 1872, in all secular educational institutions there the language of instruction was Russian; In 1873, similar measures were taken to restrict the use of the Ukrainian, Belorussian, Moldavian, Lithuanian and German languages. The Caucasus, including Georgia, became the target of Russification through education, where the local population was required to learn the Russian language (Laitin, 1998). The letter published in “Sakartvelo”, the Georgian émigré newspaper, refers to this specific measure of the Russification policy, which states:

“The government tries to turn schools into an instrument of politics and not of education, it introduces the Russian language into Finnish, Polish, Georgian and Armenian schools because,

according to the government, one type of people should live in St. Petersburg, Warsaw, Helsingfors, Tiflis, and Etchmiadzin, and these people should be Russians, because the autocratic government requires the elimination of local differences to make it easier to lord it over a huge unvaried flock for its own glory and benefit” (Sakartvelo, 1903, N3).

The main policy of Russification was the replacement of local languages with Russian in primary, secondary and higher education institutions. This policy was not applied consistently throughout the empire, on the contrary, on the one hand, there were many contradictions and inconsistencies between laws and the policy, and on the other hand, between specific measures that led to resistance.

Although sources on language policy and practice in the Russian Empire are still relatively scarce, several new studies on the policy of the Soviet era have emerged in recent years (Alpatov, 2000; Grenoble, 2003; Smith, 1998) that fill this gap.

From the 1860s the Russian Empire began to systematically pursue the policy of Russification in Georgia. In the last decades of the century, Kirill Yanovsky, head of the Caucasus Educational District, made every effort to eradicate the Georgian language from schools and administration (Jones, 2005, p. 9). In this regard, the press of the Georgian emigrants of the early 20th century actively covered the issue of the eradication of the Georgian language in secular and parochial schools. As a proof of this, the letter written by Ober-Prosecutor Konstantin Pobedonostsev to Paul Lebedev, the Exarch of Georgia, published in the newspaper “Sakartvelo” under the headline “What the Russian Government Thinks of Us” is noteworthy:

“The Georgian school should be a tool only for spreading the Russian language, not knowledge; The parochial schools must be taken away from the Georgian clergy, because the Georgian clergy is not reliable and cannot teach Russian properly; There is a hope for the liberation of Georgia among the circles of Georgian youth; It is necessary to divide the Georgian nation and kill the Georgian language in the Georgian provinces of Samegrelo, Svaneti and Abkhazia” (Sakartvelo, 1903, N2).

It is noteworthy that the full version of Pobedonostsev's letter entitled “Russification of Georgia, Pobedonostsev's Authentic Letter” (“Russification de La Géorgie, lettre authentique de Pobedonostsev”) was published in “La Géorgie”, issue No.1, 1903 _ a French version of the newspaper “Sakartvelo”. He aimed to completely eradicate the Georgian language from the schools of Samegrelo and Svaneti and replace it with the Russian language.

The implementation of the educational policy of Russification in Georgia began as early as 1801, but it reached its extreme levels in the early 1980s. The system began its work by attacking the Georgian language and set itself the task to completely eradicate the Georgian language and Georgian culture from schools. Very few hours were allocated to teaching the Georgian language in schools, but it still hindered the spread of the Russian civilization in Georgia, i.e. impeded the implementation of

the Russification policy.

One of the illustrative documents of Yanovsky's Russification policy in Georgia in the 1980s is the 1881 curriculum of the Caucasian Educational District that was published as a separate book (Учебный план начальной школы – в среде туземного населения и о постановке в ней русского языка. Тифлис, 1881) and sent to the schools under the Ministry for immediate implementation. The essence of the plan was to exclude the mother tongue from elementary schools and to make Russian the language of instruction. According to the plan, in elementary schools all subjects had to be taught in the mother tongue only during the first year. During the second year - both the native and Russian languages were used, and during the third year all the subjects were taught only in Russian. From the third year, the Georgian language was completely excluded from Georgian schools and was not taught as a separate discipline.

According to Yanovksy and royal officials, it was the school that was to become a powerful tool for the degeneration of local nations and their Russification. Certainly, his predecessors understood this well and worked in this direction in Georgia, but his merit to tsarism was the fact that he started the implementation of the Russification policy in Georgia in a more resolute and systematic manner than others (Khundadze, 1939, p. 37).

Yanovsky's first move was soon followed by a harsh reaction resulting in the abolition of the 1881 curriculum and further restrictions on the Georgian language. The Caucasian Educational District completely excluded the Georgian language from the secular and parochial schools of Samegrelo and Svaneti, and it was declared to be a non-native language. Therefore, teachers who gave preference to the Georgian language were obliged to pay special attention to the Mingrelian and Svan languages in the learning process. Pobedonostsev's disgruntled letter, which was published in the émigré press, responded to this matter:

“Since school supervisors and teachers are Georgians, of course, they pay more attention to the Georgian language. Before opening primary and parochial schools in Svaneti and Samegrelo, it was necessary to translate religious books into Svan and Mingrelian languages, to start religious services in these languages, and to teach the Russian language by means of these languages in the same way as in secular schools. But in parochial schools they do not pay attention to this matter, and the local clergy does not support the department of education in publishing prayers in the Mingrelian and Svan languages” (Sakartvelo, 1903, N 2).

As we can see, the Caucasian Educational District tried to replace the Georgian language with Mingrelian and Svan in secular and parochial schools to achieve its final goal. This measure of Russification served the purpose of disconnecting the residents of different parts of Georgia and was

directed against the consolidation of the Georgian nation. The information about the abovementioned can be found in “Chronicles of Georgian Life”, the section of the same newspaper: “From Pobedonostsev's letter printed in our newspaper, it seems clear that the government's intention is to divide the Georgian nation and separate people from each other” (Sakartvelo, 1903, N4).

It is significant that the Georgian language and schooling in Georgian were preserved only in the church-affiliated schools, in particular, in parochial schools, where schooling was in the mother tongue. But, despite this, in 1901, Archpriest Ioann Vostorgov, the supervisor of the diocesan school of Kartli-Kakheti, introduced a new curriculum, according to which in all parochial schools of the city, the medium of instruction had to be Russian instead of the mother tongue from the first year at school. He played a big role in eradicating the Georgian language from the parochial schools of Samegrelo and Svaneti and tried to introduce religious teaching in the Mingrelian and Svan languages, which did not bring about the desired results (Sigua, 1959, p. 17). The Georgian émigré press responds to this fact under the title “Vostorgov and Our Depravity”, which was considered to be one of the urgent issues in the education field of Georgia at that time:

“The government has been trying for a long time to exclude the Georgian language from the churches of Samegrelo, but since this caused dissatisfaction among the inhabitants, it did not dare to lay its hand on this matter. Today, Vostorgov has taken an alternative approach to the matter and intends to achieve the same goal in a different way: if the Georgian language is removed from the parochial schools of Samegrelo and Svaneti no one will be able to read and write in Georgian. The clergy will also forget to read and write in Georgian and then it will be easy to eradicate Georgian from the church as well” (Sakartvelo, 1903, N5).

The article under the headline “l'oeuvre de Vostorgof” published in the French-language newspaper “La Géorgie”, issue No. 4, 1903 provides the information about Vostorgov's harmful activities against the Georgian language. In the newspaper “Sakartvelo” a question was raised concerning Vostorgov and the harmful activities of the official reactionary Russian pedagogy:

“40 Georgian and 6 Russian students study at the parochial school of Kukia cemetery. This year the Georgian language will be abolished and schooling will start directly in the Russian language. Hurrah for Russian pedagogy, which is initiated by spoiled Vostorgov. We will try to inform European society about the Russian scientific pedagogy, and we have doubts that such a science of Vostorgov will greatly raise Russia's prestige in Europe, which is so dear to him” (Sakartvelo, 1904, No. 9).

A letter published in one of the issues of “Sakartvelo” in 1905, provides information on the appointment of a diocesan supervisor of Guria-Samegrelo schools:

“Vasilyev, the former diocesan supervisor of Imereti, who does not know a single word of our language, was appointed as a diocesan supervisor of Guria-Samegrelo schools. It is obvious that

Vasilyev has not been appointed to this position in order to educate; without knowing the Georgian language the supervisor's actions will be a wasted effort. One had to be blind not to guess why Vasilyev has been appointed in Guria-Samegrelo. He is sent to Russify people here. We all know that. But we also know that, today our people are so awake that the Vasilyevs and Vostorgovs cannot make them forget their language, on the contrary, they will encourage them to love it more and awaken the desire to learn it better” (Sakartvelo, 1905, N20).

The struggle of the Georgian intelligentsia for the introduction of the Georgian language teaching was not successful. For example, at the meeting on December 2, 1894 Poti City Council discussed the issue of introducing the Georgian language teaching in the schools of Samegrelo and filed a petition to the trustee of the Caucasian Educational District, which was signed by the head of the city of Poti, Niko Nikoladze. It says:

“... I humbly ask Your Highness to issue an appropriate decree in order to make teaching of the Georgian language compulsory for local children in the city school from the beginning of the next academic year. In addition, I would like to inform you that the city council will cover the necessary expenses for teachers as long as the teaching of the Georgian language continues in the school” (Sigua, 1959, p. 54).

The “Immersion Method” of Teaching

The history of the methodology of foreign language teaching has gone through several stages of its development. One of them was the direct, i.e. natural, the so-called “immersion method” that emerged in the 60s of the 19th century and became widespread in the USA, European countries, Russia, and Georgia as well. The direct method is based on the principle of mother tongue acquisition, therefore, when used in teaching foreign languages, it deliberately refrains from using the learner’s native language.

Francois Gouin was one of the first reformers of the nineteenth century who tried to develop a method to teach children a foreign language (Gouin, 1892). At the end of the century, other reformers also paid attention to naturalistic principles of language learning, and for this reason they are sometimes referred to as advocates of the “direct” method. Lambert Sauveur (1826–1907) was among those who tried to apply natural principles to language lessons in the 19th century. He used intensive oral interaction in the target language, employing questions as a way of presenting and eliciting the language. He opened a language school in Boston in the late 1860s, and his method soon became referred to as the Natural Method (Sauveur, 1874). Sauveur and other believers in the Natural Method argued that a foreign language could be taught without translation or the use of the learner’s native

tongue if meaning was conveyed directly through demonstration and action (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 11).

Maximilian Delphinius Berlitz, a famous German linguist and a teacher, started teaching English as a foreign language in Rhode Island in 1878. It is said that one incident helped to develop a new method of teaching. Berlitz fell ill and asked his French colleague to lead classes. The colleague knew almost no spoken English, however, he intuitively found a way to convey information to the students and was able to translate words without using his native language. As a result of the successful trial, Berlitz and his colleague laid the foundation for the “Direct Method” of foreign language teaching, which later became popularly known as the “Berlitz Method” (Berlitz, 1916, p. 10).

The Berlitz's method turned out to be very successful among wealthy, highly motivated clients, but attempts to implement it in secondary schools have not yielded the desired results as it did not take into account the realities of school education and lacked a thorough methodological basis. In addition, the direct method has a number of disadvantages: not all teachers who speak their native language are highly-skilled professionals. Therefore, they cannot follow the methodological principles and often have to give extensive explanations when a concise answer in the student’s native language would be more efficient.

In 1904 “Tsnobis Purtseli” published a long letter about the essence and uselessness of the “immersion method” in educational institutions of Georgia under the title “The Immersion Method”:

“Recently, in our schools, and in schools for non-Russians in general, the so-called “natural” or, in other words, unnatural, the “immersion” method of teaching has established itself and almost prevailed. It is called the immersion method because the teacher and the students are not allowed to speak to each other in the language that they both understand, which they know very well and have been speaking since birth... So what is the benefit of this method? None. No matter how even the most committed teacher tries, no matter how he approaches the subject to be studied, the students will still vaguely grasp everything that is explained to them using the sign language” (Tsnobis Purtseli, 1904, N2652).

Based on the above, the suitability of the “immersion method” is rightly evaluated by the journal “Ganatileba” (Education), in the issue N2, 1913:

“This method is not new in the Caucasus. It has a 30-year history... but the method has not won sympathy and is not widespread, because it was accompanied by numerous artificialities. This method has not been developed yet. It is useful for an inexperienced teacher, while an experienced teacher will not be able to get any benefit from it” (Ganatileba, 1913, No. 2).

Individual teaching approaches and methods differ in the way they have addressed these issues from the late nineteenth century to the present. As we can see the Direct Method can be regarded as

the first language teaching method to have caught the attention of language teaching specialists, and it offered a methodology that appeared to move language teaching into a new era. It marked the beginning of the “methods era.” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 12).

From the early 90s of the 19th century, another anti-pedagogical, extremely reactionary measure for Russification in the field of education started to be imposed in Georgia. It was the implementation of the so called “immersion method” in schools, which was organized by Levitsky, the director of public schools of the Kutaisi Governorate. In connection with this, Trophime Khundadze, a researcher of the Georgian pedagogy and a historian, notes:

The “immersion method”, which caused great anxiety among the Georgian society members in the 19th century, was not widespread in the schools of Kakheti, and in the Tiflis Governorate in general. The initiative belonged to Levitsky, the director of schools of the Kutaisi Governorate and was spread in this governorate. However, the director of the schools of the Tiflis Governorate - Streletsky did not consider it obligatory and did not implement it in the institutions under his authority” (Khundadze, 1951, p. 122).

When applying the “immersion method” the teacher was forbidden to explain the issues related to teaching the Russian language to the students in their native language. Explaining unfamiliar words and terms using the native language was also forbidden. Every Russian word had to be explained in the Russian language using visual aids and other means. It is natural that many words explained in this way would remain incomprehensible to the students. In such a situation, students only had to mechanically recite the word, the meaning of which was unknown to them.

Interesting information about the authors of the “Natural Method” can be found in the newspaper “Tsnobis Purtseli”. It reads as follows:

“The natural way of teaching forbids using the mother tongue (natural language) of foreign nations in their teaching-learning process, and, therefore, it is not natural. This method was first introduced in the United States of America. Gennes and Berlitz were its representatives. From the United States, the Gennes and Berlitz method spread to Germany. They started to write about it in pedagogical journals and many people were attracted to it. A number of textbooks have been written: by Rossman, Schmidt, Zappa, Birnbaum and others. In our country (in Russia), the matter was first dealt with by Sheltsel, and then by F. Levitsky (Caucasus)” (Tsnobis Purtseli, 1904, N2597).

In accordance with the essence and nature of the “immersion method”, teachers were forced to visually show many actions. It was often embarrassing for teachers and did not give anything to students. For example, there are known facts when during the class teachers sometimes played the role of a dog and barked, or imitated a chicken, etc. Levitsky himself gave examples of this to teachers at

his “model” lessons, which he sometimes conducted during teacher training sessions and courses. On the basis of the “immersion method” he compiled a new textbook of the Russian language – Russian Language Course for Primary Schools in Transcaucasia (“Курс русского языка для начальных школ Закавказья”), first published in 1894. This is how Levitsky justifies the expediency of using the “immersion method”: “Knowledge of the native language interferes with learning another language, and the conclusion follows by itself: it should not be used to learn another (Russian) language and it should not be taught as an obstacle to it” (Khundadze, 1951, p. 110). Being the director of public schools, Levitsky used his authority and administratively distributed his textbooks to schools in western Georgia and demanded the removal of “Russkoe Slovo” (Russian Word) by Iakob Gogebashvili.

The Georgian émigré newspaper “Sakartvelo” responds to Levitsky's violent interference in educational matters and publishes the information as follows:

“The teachers of the schools of Samegrelo and Abkhazia have received an order from the inspector of public schools of the Kutaisi Governorate and are instructed to teach children using the immersion method in schools, so that in this way the Georgian language will completely disappear in Western Georgia” (Sakartvelo, 1904, N1).

The introduction of the “immersion method” in schools was based on a political claim - it aimed at complete eradication of the Georgian language from schools and was directed against the national interests of the Georgian people. That is why stopping the use of the “immersion method” at schools was rightly considered one of the combat tasks of the national liberation movement. Representatives of the Georgian intelligentsia fiercely opposed all these measures, but to no avail. Tsarism steadily pursued the policy of denationalization taking increasingly harsh and cruel measures to destroy the Georgian language, culture and nation.

Under these conditions, Georgian was the language of instruction only in the church-affiliated schools. Attacks against the Georgian language in parochial schools began from the period when the schools were headed by Vostorgov.

The contribution of the Georgian historian and researcher Tedo Jordania to the protection of the Georgian language is of much importance. He held the position of a supervisor of Guria-Samegrelo parochial schools. In spite of this, he was not in favour of the “immersion method” of teaching:

“I was asked about the immersion method supported by M. Vostorgov. I rejected this method and preferred the “comparative method”, i.e. studying the Russian language with the help of the Georgian language. I was asked: Are Mingrelians Georgians or not? I determinedly claimed that Mingrelians are Georgians and they understand Georgian. I thought that many questions would be asked, but none of the attendees gave me any other questions and the debate ended” (Jordania, 1913, p. 5).

The Georgian press raised the issue of intensive teaching of the Georgian language in schools and declared a serious fight against the implementers of the Russification policy and supporters of the “immersion method”.

Foreign Authors about Russification in Georgia

It is interesting how Europe reacted to the publication of the newspaper “Sakartvelo” and its French-language version “La Géorgie”. The newspaper “Sakartvelo” had a special section “How the European Press and European Public Figures Reacted to the Publication of “Sakartvelo”, which was dedicated to the problems of the educational policy in Georgia. Important and valuable letters published in “Sakartvelo” are particularly noteworthy. They refer to Georgia, the Georgian people, the Georgian language and its rich history. Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, a member of the French Academy, writes:

“Messrs. Editors, I am very glad, that you have sent me your newly published paper _ “La Géorgie”. I know your beautiful homeland, which is undoubtedly considered the most beautiful area of the country. I have always been opposed to the policy aimed at degeneration and Russification of your country... Your desire to preserve the nation will always be sympathized with by all liberals who, like me, believe that small nations have every right to protect their identity and language” (Sakartvelo, 1903, N4).

In addition, the editorial office of “Sakartvelo” received a letter from Oxford professor York Powell printed in the 80th issue of the French newspaper “Européen”. The letter entitled “Tsarism and Georgia” was written by Pierre Chiaro:

“Recently, the policy of Russification has awakened national consciousness in the Caucasus. Since 1892, Pobedonostsev has shamelessly been claiming that the Georgian school should be considered to be an instrument for spreading the Russian language. He also reproached Georgian teachers for having a great desire to preserve the Georgian language. Pobedonostsev has fallen in love with the Mingrelian and Svan dialects and believes that the Georgian language is hostile to these dialects. For the sake of spreading “culture and Christianity”, Pobedonostsev wanted to translate books into these dialects, and teach the Russian language using these dialects instead of Georgian” (Sakartvelo, 1903, N4).

The establishment of the newspaper “Sakartvelo” was not overlooked by “The Times”, one of the largest and oldest English newspapers in Europe. On the pages of the issue of August 15, 1903 its correspondent tells readers about the Georgian newspaper published in Paris:

“It is interesting that the desire to protect the national identity was born among Georgians, for

which they founded a special body “La Géorgie” in Paris. Alexander I incorporated the old Kingdom of Georgia into Russia in 1801, who promised Georgians to preserve their language. But all this was an empty promise. Since then Russia has been trying to Russify Georgia. Not a single national institution remains in Georgia, everything is taken away by Russia. The Georgian language is banned in schools, and Pobedonostsev, in order to strengthen Russian influence, even took the leadership of parochial schools away from the local clergy” (Sakartvelo, 1903, No. 7).

A well-known Danish critic Georg Brandes dedicated a long letter to Georgia entitled “The Georgian Nation”, which was published in the Danish newspaper “Politiken” N180. The information about the abovementioned can be found in “Sakartvelo”, the 3rd issue of 1903:

“In 1801, Pavle insolently issued a “decree” announcing the complete union of Georgia with Russia. Since then, Georgians have been silent, but now they have broken this silence and are still striving for liberation. Their mother tongue has been excluded from schools. We can clearly see this from Pobedonostsev's letter, in which he forbids the clergy to teach in the Georgian language in parochial schools. All such measures are not used for the benefit of the students, because the Russian language is rarely understood by the students. It is done only to spread the Russian language. As for schools, their number is very small and the situation has become so bad that a quarter of the students can hardly read and write” (Sakartvelo, 1903, No. 6).

The problem of the educational policy of Russification is discussed in the letter published in “Sakartvelo” under the title “The National Question”, the extract from the book “Histoire politique de l'Europe contemporaine. Évolution des parties et des formes politiques (1814-1914)” by Charles Seignobos, a French historian and Sorbonne University professor:

“What does the all-Russian social democracy promise us? Let's see their programme. In it we find Article 8, which states: People are given the right to be educated in their mother tongue; The state and local self-government bodies should open and maintain schools necessary for the education of the people; Every citizen has the right to speak their native language during meetings; Along with the state language, the mother tongue also has an equal right in public and state institutions. I will quote the very article from the Austrian constitution that refers to the national question: “Every race in the state is equal before the law: in particular, every person has the inviolable right to protect their nationality and language.” In schools, state institutions and public life the equality of languages, that are found in the country, is ensured by the state. In the areas, where there are representatives of various races, public education institutions should be arranged in such a way that none of them is obliged to learn a foreign language; In particular, education should be given to every race in their mother tongue. (Sakartvelo, 1904, N3).

Conclusion

The aim of the article was to study the issues of the educational language policy of Russification in Georgia according to the press of the Georgian emigrants of the early 20th century.

The language policy in the educational field took its extreme form in the late 19th and early 20th century, when public education in the Caucasus was headed by Kirill Yanovsky, the trustee of the Caucasus Educational District.

The Russification policy was directed against all local elements _ the eradication of the language, national culture, and aimed at the assimilation of the Georgian people. Public, parochial and theological schools in Georgia, namely in Imereti, Samegrelo and Svaneti, were the main segments of the education system, where the essence and nature of the reactionary Russification, colonial policy of tsarism were strongly manifested, the main goal of which was the Russification and assimilation of the future Georgian generation.

The exposure of the educational policy of Russification, the elucidation of its essence and nature, and the formation of a healthy public opinion occupied an important place in the social movement. The progressive print media was widely used for these purposes. Georgian democratic intelligentsia, writers, publicists, public figures, teachers boldly wrote in the press against such figures in the administration of the educational institution (Yanovsky, Pobedonostsev, Vostorgov and others), who were focused on destroying the Georgian people, their language and culture. The press of the Georgian Emigrants of the early 20th century, including the newspaper “Sakartvelo”, played a major role in protecting the native language and enhancing its importance.

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